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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DILI 000223

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SUBJECT: CNRT LEADER XANANA GUSMAO ON ELECTIONS

REF: DILI 218

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Dili, East Timor, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (U) Summary: In a June 5 meeting with Charge and Poloff, a relaxed and confident Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao, former President and currently leader of the National Council of Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT), which hopes to oust the ruling Fretilin Party in East Timor's parliamentary elections on June 30, shared his views on the ongoing campaign season. Gusmao provided a detailed readout of last weekend's campaign-related violence in the eastern district of Viqueque, implicating Fretilin supporters as the main culprits and citing their tactics and public relations response as an indicator of their weakness. He provided an overview of priorities should CNRT lead the next government, emphasizing a non-partisan approach in which government positions would be filled based on competence rather than party loyalty. He reported that CNRT has reached a gentleman's agreement with the other two main opposition tickets that none of them will enter into any coalition with Fretilin and that they instead will work together to form a new government. End summary.

Campaigning in the East

¶2. (C) Charge and Poloff met with former President of the Republic and currently leader of the CNRT opposition party, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao, on June 5 in his newly appointed party headquarters. The CNRT offices were buzzing with activity, with various committee meetings taking place elsewhere in the building and supporters and coordinators from the district gathered in casual groups throughout the facility. Gusmao began by recounting his version of last weekend's violence (reftel) which left three dead in the eastern district of Viqueque. He described CNRT's campaigning in the three eastern districts as basically positive but accompanied by an escalating series of

incidents of harassment and attacks by Fretilin supporters. While the first events in Lautem district involved only vocal disruption, it devolved to rock throwing when they reached Baucau.

13. (C) In Viqueque, campaigning initially went smoothly until they reached the Uatulare area. (Note: Uatulare is historically the most volatile area of Viqueque and was also the site of two attacks on campaigners for Jose Ramos-Horta during the presidential campaign. Investigations into these attacks resulted in the suspension of the District Police Commander, Gaspar Soares, for his involvement in them.) In Uatulare, Gusmao reported that groups of youth began disturbing their campaigning, at one point surrounding their vehicles and prompting his armed security personal to fire warning shots. When the shooting of Afonso Kudelai took place later in Viqueque town, Gusmao was in a meeting with suspended District Police Commander Soares, at the request of a local priest. Gusmao linked Soares with the various attacks, noting in particular that many of his people had observed Soares accompanying the shooter from Uatulare to Viqueque. Throughout the earlier incidents, Gusmao noted that Luis da Silva, the PNTL officer who shot Kudelai, was present and helping to lead the harassment of the campaigners. He described da Silva as a known Fretilin stalwart, and unequivocally rejected the allegation, made in a Fretilin press release, that Kudelai had been armed.

14. (C) Gusmao emphasized his view that the weekend incidents do not reflect lack of support for him in the East. He said that Fretilin likes to think of the eastern districts as their "fortress" but that "they forget that I spent five years there during the struggle". (Gusmao began his work to rebuild the resistance in the furthest East district of Lautem in the late 1970s.) He noted that even some members of the population that were shouting abuse and calling him a "traitor" as he passed through, they were often simultaneously waving and smiling at him in recognition. He also emphasized that those involved in the harassment and attacks did not represent the whole

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population, but were rather "youths directed by PNTL and Fretilin party cadres", including Fretilin-affiliated police, district administrators, and members of parliament, a charge he repeated several times for emphasis in the course of the conversation. He did not tar all the police with one brush, noting that there were Fretilin members in the police who carried out their jobs impartially. Gusmao recounted an appeal he had made to then acting-Prime Minister Estanislau da Silva during the presidential campaign that Fretilin must instruct its members within the police to behave well; otherwise, it would reflect badly on the party.

15. (C) Prior to our meeting with Gusmao, Embassy sources within CNRT had relayed their fear that the shooting of Kudelai was connected to a larger plot to target Gusmao himself. When asked whether he thought the shooting was planned, Gusmao said he had been warned while in Uatulare that something would happen in Viqueque, possibly a shooting. He relayed that he believed there may have been an attempt to target himself, former Foreign Minister Jose Luis Guterres, and other dissident Fretilin Mudansa members who are supporting the CNRT. As a result of these early warnings, his close protection personnel took additional precautions while in Viqueque town.

16. (C) Xanana Gusmao said he believed that last weekend's events were to a great extent the result of the political volatility specific to Viqueque district, where Fretilin's presidential candidate received two-thirds of the vote and many locals regard opposition to Fretilin as a form of national betrayal. However, he noted that dynamics there have some connection with the overall picture in the three eastern districts and alluded to his ongoing communication with former clandestine networks in the region, saying "we are watching." He was relatively sanguine regarding the potential for campaign-related violence in the rest of the country, but expressed concern about specific hotspots, saying that he expected problems in Same, where he

said that the Fretilin District Administrator is known to have weapons, as well as Ermera and Covalima districts. He said that the situation in Dili was less likely to be problematic and could be relatively easily contained by the United Nations and the Australian International Stabilization Force (ISF).

17. (C) Gusmao acknowledged that tension between Fretilin members and members of its dissident wing, Fretilin Mudansa, were also a factor in some of the unrest manifested in the East, but emphasized the right of Mudansa members to support who they chose. Fretilin has been publicly berating CNRT for its alliance with Mudansa, blaming Mudansa's CNRT supporters as the instigators of the eastern problems and excoriating the group's continued use of Fretilin symbols despite its opposition to the current party. Gusmao dismissed this as rhetoric produced by Fretilin's anger at losing support among its own members.

Post-election planning

18. (C) Gusmao exuded confidence in CNRT's electoral prospects, emphasizing that everywhere he traveled in the country people want change. He said that CNRT has recently reached a gentleman's agreement with the two other most prominent opposition groups, the Democratic Party (PD) and the coalition of the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the Timorese Social Democrat Association (ASDT). According to the agreement, none of these parties will accept any invitation by Fretilin to form a government. Instead, they will work together to form the combined majority needed to form a government. Gusmao emphasized that even if CNRT gains an absolute majority, it would still work with other parties to form the government, and believes that both PD and PSD/ASDT will do the same. (Note: some form of alliance among these three is widely considered the most likely governance outcome. However, tensions between opposition parties, and in particular resentment on the part of the established parties toward Gusmao for encroaching on their opposition territory, may complicate this process.)

A Government Of Technocrats?

19. (C) Gusmao said that he wanted to form a government of

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ministers chosen on the basis of expertise and qualifications, not political affiliation. Several times in the discussion he used the term "technocrat" to describe the kind of minister he was seeking. He charged that the Fretilin government of former Prime Minister had made too many decisions based of political and party considerations, and as a result had accomplished little. East Timor, he said, now needs a new culture of professionalism in governance, instead of all decisions being made by a ruling clique. For this reason, a CNRT government would also implement decentralization. He criticized the Fretilin government for poor planning. Former PM Alkatiri, he said, never had serious priorities or a master plan in governance, and when asked about this would only reply that "the plan was in the budget." A CNRT-led government, Gusmao said, would devise a five-year plan for government, and hoped to create institutions and government processes that would be de-linked from partisan politics.

110. (C) Comment: Xanana Gusmao did not seem in the least rattled by his experiences last weekend. During the discussion, he was relaxed and ebullient, exuding confidence. He also was restrained in assigning blame for the Viqueque incident. While he made it clear that he believed that Fretilin in cooperation with sympathetic elements in the PNTL bore responsibility, he did not belabor the matter or attack the PNTL's leadership. He appears to regard provocations by Fretilin supporters as par for the course and as an indication of his own position of strength and Fretilin's perception of its own vulnerability. He also gave the impression of being in his element, with the conflictual environment and rumors of plots to assassinate him possibly being reminiscent of his Falintil leader days and therefore

placing him in a relative comfort zone. End comment.
RECTOR